

NATIONAL POLICY TO PROMOTE GLOBALLY IMPORTANT AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE SYSTEMS (GIAHS) SITES IN INDIA

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As informed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), India currently hosts three Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS): the Koraput region in Odisha, the Kuttanad farming system in Kerala, and the Saffron Heritage of Kashmir. The Koraput region is renowned for its subsistence paddy cultivation, predominantly on highland slopes, and is home to a vast diversity of paddy landraces and farmer-developed varieties. It also harbors rich genetic resources of medicinal plants, deeply interwoven with the indigenous tribal communities and their traditional knowledge systems. The Kuttanad system in Kerala stands out as a unique below-sea-level farming landscape, comprising wetlands for paddy cultivation and fish catching, garden lands for coconut and food crops, and inland water bodies for fishing and shell collection. Meanwhile, the Saffron Park of Kashmir represents a rich agro-pastoral system characterized by traditional saffron cultivation, intercropping, and the use of organic farming practices, all of which contribute to maintaining local biodiversity and soil health.

GIAHS is an FAO programme. Schemes and policies of Government of India support these sites. As reported by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir, for economic revival of saffron cultivation in Jammu and Kashmir has been supported under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).

Government of Odisha reported that proactive steps have been taken on conserving its biodiversity, preserving landraces of different crops and branding in Koraput. The programme also incorporates community seed banks and organic farming methods, focussing on revival of neglected crops and forgotten foods.

As reported by the Government of Kerala, two works for the development of infrastructure in the paddy sector in the Kuttanad region are included under the current year's RKVY-DPR projects. These include: (i) 'Haritam Harippad'—infrastructural development works of various Padasekharams in Alappuzha District. (ii) Assistance to Research on 'Ecological Utilization of Water Hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) in Kuttanad'.

This information was given by Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Ramnath Thakur in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

RC/ KSR/AR

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